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## ART. VII.—CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. — *On Early English Pronunciation, with especial reference to Shakespeare and Chaucer.* By ALEXANDER J. ELLIS, F. R. S., etc. Part I. *On the Pronunciation of the XIVth, XVIth, XVIIth, and XVIIIth Centuries.* London: Published for the Philological Society, by Asher & Co., London and Berlin; and for the Early English Text Society, by Trübner & Co., 60 Paternoster Row. 1869. 8vo. pp. viii, 416.

THE Second Part, which is to complete this learned and valuable work, was expected, according to the author's statement, to have about the same extent as the First, and to be ready for publication before the close of the year 1869. It will investigate the pronunciation of Anglo-Saxon and Old English prior to the fourteenth century, with that of the Teutonic and Scandinavian sources of the English; it will discuss the correspondence of orthography and pronunciation from Anglo-Saxon times to the present day; and it will contain a series of documents and illustrations relating to the pronunciation of our language in the successive periods of its history. Its appearance will be awaited with much interest; yet it will probably be little more than an extended supplement to the part now before us. It is safe to assume that this first part is much the more important of the two, not only exhibiting the author's method, but presenting us with the general views and opinions to which it has led him. We shall be in little danger of doing him injustice if we criticise what we already have, without waiting for that which is yet to come.

It is saying little, to say that Mr. Ellis has surpassed all predecessors in the same field. We believe that he is the first who has really endeavored to collect everything which can throw light on the history of English pronunciation, and to treat the whole subject with scientific precision and thoroughness. In the collection of his material he has used exemplary diligence, sparing no pains to make it complete and exhaustive; and in the discussion of it he has shown a fairness of mind, a freedom from prejudice, a simple love of truth, not less exemplary. He is always careful to present the evidence on which his conclusions are founded, and to distinguish conclusions which seem to him only probable, in greater or less degree, from those which he regards as certain. He does not fail to recognize the uncertainties which affect much of the evidence, — uncertainties arising either from the nature of the subject or from the peculiarities of individual witnesses. Nor does

he keep back the evidence which seems unfavorable to what he thinks the best-supported conclusions ; but presents the whole case, making it possible for the reader to form an independent judgment.

In the notation of spoken sounds, Mr. Ellis uses a comprehensive system, which he calls by the name *palaeotype* (only the *old types* being used in it), and sets it forth in a brief introduction. It is based on the Roman alphabet, and contains no sign that cannot be found in the cases of an ordinary printing-office. To secure the necessary variety, italics, small capitals, and (in some instances) inverted letters, are used to denote sounds distinct from, though akin to, those expressed by the corresponding Roman letters. As a further means to the same end, the forms (h, j, w) are used, without any consonant power, merely as diacritical signs, modifying the sounds of the letters with which they are connected ; while the forms (H, J, W, and Q) represent the consonant sounds in *hay*, *yea*, *way*, *wing*. Long vowels are represented by doubling the signs which stand for the corresponding short vowels ; diphthongs, by writing their elementary vowels in immediate succession ; successive vowels, if they do not form a diphthong, are separated by a comma. Words and sounds, written in palaeotype, if mixed with ordinary writing, are distinguished by enclosing them in marks of parenthesis ; thus, (H*ee*, i*q*) for *hay*ing. Mr. Ellis is careful to explain that this mode of writing is not designed to supersede the current orthography in popular use ; it is intended for scientific purposes, as a means of designating conveniently and exactly the sounds heard in English and in other languages. In his tabular Key to Palaeotype he gives more than two hundred and fifty distinct sounds, with their notation in his system. He also compares these signs of his with the letter-forms devised by Mr. Melville Bell, and described in his "Visible Speech." The number of signs required in treating of English pronunciation past and present is, of course, much less than two hundred and fifty. Among those which occur often in the book we may be allowed to give here the most important, as it will be convenient to use them in the statements and criticisms that we have to offer. The short vowels (a, e, i, o, u) have the Italian sounds ; but these are almost all different from the English short vowels in *pat*, *pet*, *pit*, *pot*, *put*, which are represented in palaeotype by (æ, e, i, o, u). The long vowels (aa, ee, ii, oo, uu), with Italian sounds, correspond more nearly to the English long in *par*, *pale*, *peel*, *pole*, *pool*, which are represented in palaeotype by (aa, ee, ii, oo, uu), where (ee, oo) are closer sounds than (ee, oo). The forms (y, œ) stand for the German ü, ö. The English short and long *a* in *want*, *war* are expressed by the small capital (A, AA) ; the short *u* in *but* by the inverted (ə) ; the diphthongs in *height*,

*house*, by (əi, əu) ; the diphthongal *u* in *tune*, by (iu). As to the consonants, we have already spoken of (h, j, w, q) ; and need only add (r) for the weak final *r* in *fair*, and (th, dh, sh, zh, tsh, dzh) for the spirant sounds in *thew*, *thou*, *shoe*, *azure*, *chew*, *Jew*.

Mr. Ellis commences his inquiry with the pronunciation of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. From the known present he goes back first of all to the recent past. For this period he has the aid of a long series of orthoepical writers ; and he begins by enumerating these in the order of time, giving full titles of works, and adding brief descriptions and criticisms. The writers to whom he refers most frequently are : John Palsgrave (*French Grammar*), 1530 ; W. Salesbury, 1547, 1567 ; Sir Thomas Smith, 1568 ; John Hart, 1569 ; William Bullokar, 1580 ; Alexander Gill, 1619 ; Ben Jonson (*English Grammar*), 1640 ; John Wallis (*English Grammar*), 1653 ; Philip Wilkins (*Philosophical Language*), 1668 ; Owen Price, 1668 ; C. Cooper, 1685 ; John Jones, 1701 ; an anonymous *Expert Orthographist*, 1704 ; James Buchanan, 1766 ; Benjamin Franklin (*Scheme for a New Alphabet*), 1768. He manifests an especial preference for Salesbury and Wallis. The latter, who was Professor of Mathematics at Oxford, wrote a *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae*, with a prefixed *Tractatus grammatico-physicus de Loquela*, in which he gives an elaborate description of the English sounds, with the positions and movements of the vocal organs in producing them. The former, a Welshman, educated at Oxford, prepared an *English Dictionary* for the use of his countrymen, with an interesting and valuable introduction, written in Welsh, on English pronunciation.

From such materials Mr. Ellis endeavors to reconstruct the prevailing pronunciation of our language during the three centuries which preceded our own. He does not disguise from himself the very great difficulties of the task. There are few things harder than to understand the descriptions of spoken sounds. Even when the writer is intelligent, it is no very easy matter to reproduce the precise position of the vocal organs, the precise utterance, which he meant to describe. But most writers have been ignorant both of the physical mechanism of speech and of the true relations of sounds. The terms which they have used are very often inexact or unmeaning. Who can be sure as to the force of *thick*, *thin*, *full*, *round*, *flat*, *hard*, *soft*, *rough*, *smooth*, *coarse*, *fine*, *sharp*, *dull*, *clear*, *obscure*, and many similar epithets, which are so commonly and so fancifully applied to vowels and consonants ? If the writer identifies a particular English sound with one in some foreign language, as the French, a variety of doubts at once suggest themselves. Are we sure that he meant to assert an absolute identity, or

only a resemblance, between the sounds compared? Are we sure that the French sound has not varied since the time in question? Are we sure that it was uniform at that time? Are we sure that the writer correctly apprehended the French sound of which he speaks? Misapprehension of foreign sounds is a thing of constant occurrence. Mr. Ellis mentions a remarkable instance in a lecture by Professor Blackie of Edinburgh, on the pronunciation of Greek; after saying that long *α* in Greek had the sound of Italian *a* in *amare*, the lecturer added immediately that "long *α* should always be pronounced like English *aw* or *au*, as in *cawl*, *maul*, etc."! Even experts may differ as to the real character of the foreign sound. Speaking of the French vowels before the nasal *n*, in *an*, *vin*, *on*, *un*, Mr. Ellis represents them, first as they seem to his own ear, and then as they appear to Dr. Rapp, M. Féline, M. Favarger, and Mr. Melville Bell; and no two of these gentlemen agree entirely with each other. Mr. Ellis further tells us that he differs from Mr. Bell in his pronunciation of several of the key-words which the latter has used to show the exact phonetic value of his symbols.

While fully recognizing these difficulties which beset his inquiry, our author has not allowed himself to be deterred from pursuing it. Taking up in succession the English vowels and consonants, he endeavors to ascertain, from a detailed examination of his authorities, how each was sounded in the sixteenth century, what changes (if any) it has undergone since then, and at what time they occurred. Most readers, we presume, will be surprised at the amount of change which he finds in English pronunciation, and especially in the vowel sounds, since the sixteenth century. Thus, to commence with the short vowels, he holds that only *ē* and *ĕ* were pronounced then as they now are, that is, as (e) and (i); as to *ā*, *ō*, *ū*, he believes that they were then pronounced (a, o, u), the first two as in Italian, and that the now prevailing sounds for them, viz. (æ, ɔ, ə), as seen in the words *cat*, *cot*, *cut*, came in during the seventeenth century. This may be true as to *ō* and *ū*; but we cannot help thinking, for reasons which will appear presently, that our current sound of *ā* is older than he makes it, — that it belonged to the pronunciation of the sixteenth century.

Next, as to the long vowels, according to Mr. Ellis, the *ē*, which in Chaucer's time (the fourteenth century) was always (ee), began to take the sound (ii) during the fifteenth. In the sixteenth, a practice arose of representing the latter sound (ii) by doubling the vowel, as *ee*; while the old sound (ee), where it remained, was often distinguished by an added *a*, as *ea*. Thus *been*, *reed*, *greet*, were pronounced as (biin, riid, griit); but *bean*, *read*, *great*, as (been, reed, greet). At length, however, the

new sound (ii) was extended to words which had for a time retained the old one, the change being particularly rapid about the end of the seventeenth century, so that early in the eighteenth *ea* had come to have in most cases the same sound as *ee*. It is curious to compare the lists of words with *ea*, given by orthoepists during the transition period, and to note the progress of the change. We find here, as in many such revolutions, that particular individuals carry out the innovating tendency to an extent which is not finally sanctioned by the prevailing usage; some writers give *break*, *great*, *indeavour*, *deaf*, etc., with the sound of (ii). Mr. Ellis, by the way, speaks of (diif) as a pronunciation which he has never been fortunate enough to hear.

The *ō* has up to a certain point the same history as the *ē*. Before the close of the fifteenth century, it had in many words passed from its proper sound of (oo) into the closer (uu). And here also the practice arose in the sixteenth century of representing the new sound (uu) by doubling the letter, as *oo*; while the old sound, where it remained, was often distinguished by an added *a*, as *oa*. Thus, *moon*, *rood*, were pronounced as (muun, ruud); but *moan*, *road*, as (moon, rood). Here, however, the parallel ceases. The movement had already spent its force before the Elizabethan time. While *ea* in most words passed on from (ee) to (ii), *oa* has never passed from (oo) to (uu); with few exceptions, — such as *move*, *prove*, and (with shortened vowel) *love*, *dove*, — the *ō* has taken on the (uu) sound only in words where that sound was indicated in the sixteenth century by the writing *oo*.

Long *ī* and *ou*, which in Chaucer's time were simple sounds, the first being pronounced (ii) and the second (uu), had to a great extent become diphthongs in the sixteenth century. In Mr. Ellis's opinion, they were more clearly diphthongal then than now, being sounded as (ei) and (ou), where each vowel must be understood as having its proper force distinctly audible. In the present pronunciation the first element is obscure; the initial position of the organs is not maintained long enough to give a fully characterized utterance; hence, orthoepists differ much as to the first vowel sound in English long *ī* and *ou*. Mr. Ellis regards it as (ə), and writes the diphthongs as now pronounced (əi, əu). This pronunciation, he thinks, came in during the seventeenth century, or perhaps during the latter part of the sixteenth.

For *ei* and *ai* our author's results are particularly interesting. He shows that in the sixteenth century they were true diphthongs, differing little, if at all, in their pronunciation, which must have been much the same with that of our affirmative *ay*. It is observed that in Shakespeare's minor poems there is but one real instance — in the words *mane*, *again* — of a rhyme between *ā* and *ai*. The change by which these com-

binaisons came to be sounded as simple vowels — usually as (ee), but *ei* in some words as (ii) — is referred, like so many other changes, to the seventeenth century.

As to long *ā*, — in *sale, came, fate*, etc., — Mr. Ellis's conclusions will cause greater surprise, and will perhaps meet with less acceptance. He holds that in the sixteenth century such words were pronounced (saal, kaam, faat) with the Italian sound of *a*; and that, in the seventeenth, the pronunciation changed to (sææl, kææm, fææt), differing only in length of sound from our *Sal, Cam, fat*. This sound, which he finds first distinctly apparent in the description of Wallis (1653), would seem to have been only transitional, as it gave place at the close of that century to (ee), which has since passed into the closer (ee), thus, (seel, keem, feet). What now is the reason for believing that English long *a* had in Shakespeare's time the Italian sound of *a*? Palsgrave, in 1530, identifies the English letter with the Italian; but Palsgrave's ear, as Mr. Ellis admits, was none of the most delicate. Hart, in 1569, identifies the English letter with the German, Italian, French, Spanish, and Welsh *a*; but this, as Mr. Ellis says, is too wide a comparison, and leaves us in doubt as to the real sound. The witness really relied upon is Salesbury, who says, in 1547, that "*a* in English is the same sound as *a* in Welsh," and represents the pronunciation of *ale, pale, sale*, etc., by writing them for Welshmen, *aal, paal, sal*, etc. This testimony makes it pretty clear that English *a* had not then the same sound as at present. If it had, Salesbury would almost certainly have compared it with Welsh *e*; and Palsgrave and Hart, with *e* in Italian, French, etc. No one now could for a moment think of giving *a*, rather than *e*, in those languages as the nearest equivalent for English long *a*. But as proof of the sound (aa), this evidence is not equally convincing. It is curious that in the following century, Wallis, whose testimony is regarded as clearest for the sound (ææ), still identifies the English and Welsh *a*. It appears that a fraction of the Welsh people now give this sound (æ) to their own *a*; and such possibly may have been the pronunciation of Salesbury. It is, doubtless, more probable that his Welsh *a* was an (a); but if so, he had no Welsh letter which would correctly represent au (æ), and he may very naturally have regarded *a* as the nearest Welsh equivalent. But what is most important, we have distinct positive evidence from independent witnesses that the English *a*, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, differed from the French *a*, and approached to the French *e*. In the fragment of a treatise on the pronunciation of French, by an unknown author, but with the date 1528 (two years earlier than Palsgrave's book), is found the following statement as to the French *A* and *E*: "*A*. ought to be pronounced fro the botom of the stomak, and all openly; *E*. a lytell hyer

in the throte, there properly where the englysshe man soundeth his *a*." Similarly, Gilles du Guez, in his account of French pronunciation, which seems to have been printed about 1532, says: "Ye shal pronounce your [French] *a* as wyde open mouthed as ye can; your [French] *e*, as ye do in latyn, almost as brode as ye pronounce your *a* in englysshe." These passages do not prove indeed that English *a* was *identical* with French *e*; in fact, the last of them excludes the idea of such an identity. But they prove an *approximation* of the English *a* to the French *e*, which is scarcely reconcilable with the sound (a) for the former. If we should assume that English *a*, at the opening of the sixteenth century, had, nearly or exactly, the sound of (æ), we should account in the most natural manner for the expressions of these writers. A similar sound, at the end of this century, is indicated by Peter Eron-dell, in his French Grammar (London, 1605). Distinguishing the French *a* from the English, he represents the sound of English *ale* by the French writing *esl* with silent *s*; that is, he finds the nearest equivalent for English *ā* in the French open *ê*. And Mr. Ellis himself finds the same sound,  $\bar{a} = (\text{æ}\text{æ})$ , clearly set forth in the description of Wallis (1653). Are we not then warranted in concluding that English *a*, as early as the year 1528, had varied from the normal sound of (a, aa), and had assumed this sound of (æ) for  $\bar{a}$ , ( $\text{æ}\text{æ}$ ) for  $\bar{a}$ ? The change may then be referred with much probability to the fifteenth century; and may naturally be regarded as the starting-point in that great revolution which, since the days of Chaucer, has transformed the whole vowel system of our language.

If we find ourselves obliged to dissent from Mr. Ellis on the pronunciation of long *a*, we are equally unable to agree with him on that of long *u*. He regards this vowel as having had, through the sixteenth century, and much of the seventeenth, the same sound as the French *u*. The conclusion is not indeed as incredible as it may seem at first view. Our English  $\bar{u}$  is nearly confined to words which have come to us either from the French itself or from the Latin after our language had fallen under French influence. The Anglo-Saxon and the oldest English had a long  $\bar{u}$ , but for five centuries it has been represented by *ou* or *ow*. The  $\bar{u}$  in Chaucer's time, and ever since, belongs to the Romance part of the language. The sound of French *u* — (y, yy) as represented in palaeo-type — is certainly a strange and difficult one for most speakers of English. But Mr. Ellis assures us that it is common in some of the English dialects at the present time. "In East Anglia, in Devonshire, in Cumberland, as well as in Scotland, (yy) and its related sounds are quite at home." We must admit, then, as something quite possible, that this may have been a current and prevailing sound of  $\bar{u}$  in the sixteenth



and seventeenth centuries. It is simply a question of evidence. Here again, as for long *a*, we find a number of orthoepists asserting the identity of the English and French sounds. Among these we may reckon Palsgrave (1530), who speaks only of English *ew*, but appears to have meant the same sound as that of *ū*; also, Sir T. Smith (1568), Hart (1569), Bullokar (1580), and lastly, Wallis (1653), whose testimony on this head is perfectly distinct and positive. Yet in this testimony of Wallis we find the clearest proof of the unreliable character of such identifications. For Bishop Wilkins, in 1668, speaking of the French *u*, declares, not only that the English do not use it, but that it is very hard for them to pronounce it. His language is: "As for the *u Gallicum*, or *whistling u*, though it cannot be denied to be a distinct simple vowel, yet it is of so laborious and difficult pronunciation to all those nations amongst whom it is not used (*as to the English*)," etc. Let it be observed that Wallis and Wilkins were contemporaries, that both were natives of Southern England, that both were for some time fellow-collegians in Oxford, that both must have mixed in the same society, and that their books were separated by an interval of only fifteen years. The discrepancy between their statements cannot be accounted for by difference of time, place, education, association, and the like. One or the other must have been in error. But a writer's statement that a foreign sound is strange to his own people and difficult for them to utter, is not in itself likely to be erroneous; and in this case it is confirmed by other evidence, all going to show that the pronunciation of *u* since Wilkins's time has been what it now is. If then the sound of French *u* was not used, and could hardly be pronounced, by the English in 1668, it cannot possibly have been the current sound of English *u* in 1653. Wallis's identification must have been an error; the native and foreign sounds which he compared were not really identical. And if a writer so intelligent and careful as Wallis could fall into this error, we need not be surprised to find it in Palsgrave, Smith, Hart, etc. Indeed, the last-named writer seems to be at variance with himself, as in an earlier treatise he identifies the vowel *u* with the word *you*. He also describes it as a diphthong, composed of *i* and *u*; it is true, he applies the same description to the French *u*; but that may only show that he misapprehended the foreign sound.

But we have positive evidence that the French and English sounds were not identical. Erondell (1605), to whose French Grammar we have referred before, gives a careful description of the way in which French *u* is to be uttered, and directs the learner to pronounce *musique*, *punir*, *subvenir*, "not after the English pronunciation, not as if written *muesique*, *puenir*, *suevenir*," with the English *ue* of *sue*, *due*, etc. Holy-

band (*French Littleton*, 1609) says : " You must take paine to pronounce our v [i. e. French *u*] otherwise then in English ; for we do think, when Englishmen do profer v [i. e. their own *u*], they say, you." Here Mr. Ellis finds a distinct recognition of our present sound of *ū*. But we should hardly speak of it as " the first distinct recognition." For Salesbury himself (1547) indicates the same sound when he says, " *u* vowel answers to the power of the two Welsh letters *u*, *w*, and its usual power is *uw*, as shown in the following words, TRUE *truw* verus, VERTUE *vertuw* probitas." It is true that the Welsh *uw*, as heard in *Duw*, " God," is not quite the same with our long *u* (as in *due*) ; but it is a pretty near approximation to it, and the nearest which is possible in the Welsh language. The difference is that in the Welsh *uw* the two elements of the diphthong are a little more distinct ; we can hear the initial element as an (*i*), very short, but perfectly recognizable, before the closely following (*u*). The English diphthongal *ū* of *due*, *tune*, *lute*, etc., has the same elements, but not with the same distinctness of utterance ; the initial position of the organs is not held long enough to give a clearly characterized sound. In this respect it resembles the English diphthongs *i* and *ou* ; and hence, like these, it has often been regarded as a simple sound. Wallis speaks of it as such, in distinction from the Welsh *uw* ; and when he identifies it with French *u*, he gives prominence to this fact, that both are simple vowels.

We believe, then, that English *ū* had in Salesbury's time, that is, in the first half of the sixteenth century, substantially the same pronunciation as at present. In the loose identifications with French *u*, made by some writers, we find no sufficient proof of the contrary ; the last and most distinct, by Wallis, is refuted by the nearly contemporaneous statements of Wilkins. In tracing back the pronunciation of the letter from the nineteenth century to the sixteenth, there is a presumption in favor of the present sound, unless pretty strong evidence can be found for a different one. We do find in our authorities some evidence of this kind ; but it is liable to grave suspicions, and is more than balanced by positive indications of the present sound. Perhaps we have dwelt longer than we ought both on this point and on the sixteenth-century pronunciation of *ā*. But they seemed to be among the most interesting questions raised by our author in his endeavor to determine the actual living utterance of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth ; and they are well fitted to illustrate the amount and character of the evidence on which he relies in the discussion of these questions. We have only to add that the testimonies which we have brought forward in opposition to his views have all been derived from his own pages, where they stand fairly presented and candidly considered.

We pass on to the consonants, the treatment of which by our author will furnish much less occasion for remark. Of the weak final *r*, as heard in *car*, *care*, which he represents by (ɹ), he finds no trace whatever in the sixteenth century. Even Wallis and Wilkins are silent in regard to it. But Ben Jonson (1640) implies its existence, when he speaks of the letter as sounded in two ways, "firme in the beginning of the words, and more *liquid* in the middle and ends." As to its present weakness, the language of Mr. Ellis is very emphatic; he represents it as little more than a vanishing quantity, and indeed as having vanished to a great extent from English pronunciation. He says: "This second (ɹ) may diphthongize with any preceding vowel. After (a, ʌ, ɔ) the effect is rather to lengthen the preceding vowel than to produce a distinct diphthong. Thus, *further*, *lord*, scarcely differ from *father*, *laud*; that is, the diphthongs (aɹ, ɔɹ) are heard almost as the long vowels (aa, ʌa). That a distinction is made by many, by more perhaps than are aware of it, is certain; but it is also certain that in the mouths of by far the greater number of speakers in the south of England the absorption of the (ɹ) is as complete as the absorption of the (l) in *talk*, *walk*, *psalm*, where it has also left its mark on the preceding vowel. When Dickens wrote Count *Smorl Tork*, he meant *Small Talk*, and no ordinary reader would distinguish between them." And again: "The diphthongs (eɹ, ʌɹ) are very difficult to separate from each other and from (əə). But the slight raising of the point of the tongue will distinguish the diphthongs from the vowel in the mouth of the careful speaker, that is, one who trains his organs to do so. *No doubt the great majority of speakers do not make any difference.*" It is fortunate for this much-abused letter that so large a part of the English-speaking world is found in America, where the first English settlers brought this *r* in a less attenuated state, and where their descendants have been largely re-enforced by users of a yet stronger *r* from Ireland and Scotland and the continent of Europe. Instead of losing the final *r*, like our brethren in Southern England, we are more likely to restore it to its ancient equivalency with the initial letter.

As to the combination *wr*, — in *write*, *wreck*, *wrath*, etc., — it appears from the testimony of Hart that the *w* was not entirely lost in the sixteenth century. It is Mr. Ellis's opinion that *wr* was sounded, not only then, but from the earliest Anglo-Saxon times, as (rw), or more exactly as (rw), a labialized *r*, the product of an effort to pronounce *r* and *w* at one and the same time. The French *roi* he represents by (rwa); and he holds that *wrath*, *wreck*, *write* were pronounced (rwath, rwek, rweit). This seems to us improbable for Old-English, and still more for Anglo-Saxon. If *wrath* had been pronounced thus, it would almost certainly

have been written *rwath*. To English ears the French *roi* appears to begin with the sound of *r* followed by that of *w*; it is safe to say that not one man in a hundred would think of it as beginning with a *w* followed by an *r*. Even the words *what*, *when*, *white*, etc., were by the Anglo-Saxons originally and generally written with *hw*, not *wh*. Would they not have followed the same analogy by writing *rw* instead of *wr*, if the sound had been what our author supposes? The copyists were accustomed to spell very much according to their own ear and taste; would they not, sometimes at least, have used the order *rw*? If *hw* has been changed to *wh*, it was probably not from any doubt as to the real order of the elements, but from the influence of the combinations *ph*, *ch*, *th*, *rh*, constantly presented in Latin orthography. There could be no such reason for adopting *wr* in preference to the seemingly more natural order *rw*. And if we look at other Teutonic languages, we find everywhere the same succession. Thus *wrath* appears in the Old Icelandic as *vreidhi*, in Swedish and Danish as *vrede*; *wrong* in Icelandic is *vrangr*, Danish *vrang*, Swedish *vång*. For *wring* the Gothic has *vriggan*; for *wreak* it has *vrikan*, *vrakjan*; for *write* it has *vrits* (Gr. *κεφαία*, "point of a letter"). In view of these considerations, who can doubt that the Anglo-Saxon writing *wr* represents the real order of the sounds, or what would appear such to hearers generally? If so, then (*rw*) cannot have been the Anglo-Saxon pronunciation; nor is there any reason for supposing that the Old-English pronunciation differed in this case from the Anglo-Saxon. The only argument we can see for Mr. Ellis's (*rw*) is the difficulty of making a true English *w* audible before *r* at the beginning of a word. We do not deny the difficulty; nor do we undertake to determine the precise sound of *wr*; but we could easily believe that *w* may have had in this case a somewhat stronger sound than we are wont to give it, — a sound perhaps approaching to the South German *w* (a *v* pronounced without pressure of the teeth against the lips), which Mr. Ellis (p. 290) finds on British ground in the Aberdeen pronunciation of *write* as (bhriit).

In this connection we have to confess some feeling of doubt, if not of scepticism, as to our author's whole theory of labialized consonants. He finds in French *loi* (*lwa*) a labialized *l*, which he thinks existed once in English, — *talk* being once sounded (*talwk*), — "but it has died out"; yet why not recognize it in *always*? So he finds a labialized *k* in *quell* (*kwel*), a labialized *t* in *twin*, a labialized *d* in *dwell*, etc. Here the *qu*, *tw*, *dw*, are in his view simple consonants, a *k*, *t*, *d*, pronounced in a labial position. To us they still appear as composite sounds. Compare *high dwell the birds* with *hide well the birds*; in continuous utterance are they not perfectly alike? What Mr. Ellis says of *twin*

and *dwell*, "that the opening of the lips [from the rounded closure required for a *w*] is really simultaneous with the release of the (t, d) contact," we are unable to reconcile with the testimony of the ear as to our own pronunciation and that which we hear around us.

The wretched weakness of utterance which has changed *know* to *no* (converting science into mere negation) was, according to all the authorities, still unknown, or at least not prevalent, in the sixteenth century; nor did it become universal before the close of the seventeenth. So too it appears that the *gh* in *light*, *weigh*, *bough*, etc., was heard, though probably with only a feeble utterance in the sixteenth century. As to the precise sound, there is an uncertainty; perhaps, as in Scotland now, it may have had both sounds of the German *ch*. It hardly survived the middle of the seventeenth century. In most words it simply dropped away without any further change; but a preceding short *i* became long, as in *light*, *night*, etc. In some cases, however, it was replaced by another spirant sound, an *f*, as in *laugh*, *cough*, *rough*, and in the vulgarisms, *oft*, *thoft*, for *ought*, *thought*. In *sigh*, *height*, *drought*, it was replaced, at least in occasional use, by the spirant *th*: the pronunciations *sith*, *heith*, *drouth*, are mentioned by orthoepists at the beginning of the last century; and *drouth* is still heard in our country, and has even been adopted in an American Dictionary of the English language.

The suppression of the *h*, like that of the weak *r*, would perhaps have become an accomplished fact if our language had been wholly dependent on the people of Southern England. On this subject our author remarks:—

"In England the use of the *h* (H) among the illiterate seems to depend upon emphatic utterance. Many persons when speaking quietly will never introduce the (H), but when rendered nervous or excited, or when desiring to speak particularly well, they abound in strong and unusual aspirations. It is also singular how difficult it is for those accustomed to omit the *h*, to recover it, and how provokingly they sacrifice themselves on the most undesired occasions by this social shibboleth. In endeavoring to pronounce the fatal letter, they generally give themselves great trouble, and consequently produce a harshness quite unknown to those who pronounce (H) naturally. An English author, S. Hirst, writing an English Grammar in German, in which fifty quarto pages are devoted to a minute account of the pronunciation of English, actually bestows one hundred and sixty-seven quarto lines of German, measuring about ninety feet, upon attempting to show that formerly *h* was not pronounced in English, and that it was altogether an orthoepistic fancy to pronounce it, saying that almost all non-linguists would admit that *h* was generally mute, or at most scarcely audible, and that linguists who denied this in theory gave into the practice. The division of the people is not exactly into linguists and non-linguists, but it must be owned that very large masses of the

people, even of those tolerably educated and dressed in silk and broadcloth, agree with the French, Italians, Spaniards, and Greeks, in not pronouncing the letter H."

The sounds of *sh* in such words as *sure*, *pressure*, *mission*, *special*, *motion*, and *zh* in such as *measure*, *vision*, *excision*, are unrecognized by the orthoepists of the sixteenth century, and are not mentioned before the middle of the seventeenth. Yet traces of these changes are pointed out in Shakespeare and Rowley. Nor can it be doubted that of the other changes ascribed to the seventeenth century, quite a number were already in progress during the sixteenth. Thus, if Hart had not written, there would have been no evidence that the pronunciation of *ai* as a simple vowel (*ee*) was known to the sixteenth century: all other orthoepists of that age make it a true diphthong; but Hart in 1569 gives it uniformly the sound of (*ee*). Mr. Ellis regards the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries as the grand periods of disturbance and revolution in the history of our language; he thinks with much reason that they owed this character to the political agitations, the great civil contests, by which they were shaken. The intermediate century, the sixteenth, he looks upon as a period of comparative stability and repose, both in politics and in pronunciation. Perhaps this is the true conception. Yet to our mind the facts reported in this book suggest rather the view that a great revolution in English pronunciation was going forward from the opening of the fifteenth to the close of the seventeenth century, and that it moved on with uninterrupted and almost unremitted progress from the beginning to the end of its course.

In the fourth chapter, which concludes this first part, Mr. Ellis deals with the pronunciation of English during the fourteenth century. Here he finds his principal means of investigation in the poetry, and especially in the rhymes, of Chaucer and Gower. He foresees that his procedure will be objected to on the ground that imperfect rhymes, which often occur in modern verse, are likely to have been yet more common in that earlier and ruder age. But he denies the force of the objection, contending that the probabilities of the case point the other way. A rhyme which is good to the eye, but not to the ear, may be tolerated by reading men; to men who do not read—and such to a great extent were the public of Chaucer and Gower—it is no rhyme at all. Appealing mainly to the ear, these poets were actually less likely than later rhymers to satisfy themselves with loose and inexact correspondences of sound. This *a priori* argument he fortifies with remarkable success by an examination of their verses, as represented by the best manuscripts. In Wright's edition of the *Canterbury Tales*, founded on the Harleian MS., No. 7,334, and containing 17,368 lines, he finds less

than fifty rhymes in which the spelling indicates a difference of pronunciation. Of these few exceptions most can be removed, either by the readings of other manuscripts, or by conjectural changes of a simple and natural character. The 33,000 verses of Gower's *Confessio Amantis* furnish only nine instances of faulty rhymes, and for these it is shown that the editor, not the author, is really responsible. The nature and force of the evidence derived from the rhymes of these poets is perhaps most strikingly seen in the case of the long *i* or *y*. These letters appear in a multitude of rhymes like the following: *wyse* and *justise*, *write* and *merite*, *vice* and *office*, *wyn* and *famyn*, *side* and *Cupide*, *lyke* and *retorike*, *while* and *Virgile*, *Bible* and *possible*, *fynde* and *Iude*, *I* and *enemy*, *therby* and *mercy*, *sky* and *truely*, *why* and *almighty*, *by* and *lady*, etc. Of the second words in these pairs, the last three, *truely*, *almighty*, and *lady*, come to us from the Anglo-Saxon. They still have in the last syllable the same vowel sound, or nearly the same, as in that language. It is not to be supposed that in the fourteenth century they should have taken up a sound like our diphthongal *i* long, only to lose it again by the sixteenth. Still less can we suppose this in reference to *justise*, *merite*, *office*, *famyn*, *Cupide*, *retorike*, *Virgile*, *possible*, *Iude*, *enemy*, *mercy*; which in Chaucer's time had just come in from the French, retaining still their native French accent, and could scarcely have undergone a change of vowel sound so sudden and extreme. But these violent suppositions are only to be avoided by admitting that the first words in the several rhyming pairs — *wyse*, *write*, *vice*, *wyn*, *side*, *lyke*, *while*, *Bible*, *fynde*, *sky*, *why*, *I*, *by*, and *therby* — still retained in the fourteenth century their primitive sound of *i* as (ii) or (ii). By similar evidence, less abundant indeed, yet sufficiently decisive, it is shown that Chaucer's *ou* or *ow*, in *hous*, *how*, *dowte*, *aboute*, *powre*, *doun*, *broun*, *founde*, etc., had not yet acquired the diphthongal sound which it bore in the sixteenth century, but was generally pronounced as a simple (uu); only where the *ou* or *ow* corresponded to an Anglo-Saxon *ow*, *aw*, did it have a diphthongal pronunciation as (oou). And in like manner it is proved that *a*, *e*, *o*, had the same sounds as are generally given to those vowels in the languages of continental Europe.

But the most important, and at the same time the most difficult point in the language of Chaucer and Gower is the pronunciation of the final unaccented *e*. Mr. Ellis has greatly enriched his work by taking into it, in a condensed form, the masterly researches on this subject by Professor Child of Harvard University, which were published in the *Memoirs of the American Academy*, Vol. IX. Professor Child has proved that the unaccented final *e* was generally sounded in the poetry

of Chaucer and Gower; but also that it was frequently silent. Of these exceptional cases, he is able to refer much the greater part to certain general principles or habits; but others seem to depend on the mere caprice of the author, and serve to indicate a varying usage and a progressive tendency to suppress the letter. The parallel furnished in German poetry by the frequent and capricious omission of the final *e*, is noticed by Professor Child; though here the influences of education and literature will doubtless save the letter from total extinction, while the sensible habit of leaving it unwritten where it is unpronounced will save much time and toil to the philologists of the future.

Mr. Ellis proposes a uniform orthography for Chaucer, which he would wish to apply also to other writers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It is founded on the orthography of the Harleian MS., already referred to; the usual modes of spelling in that MS., the representations usually given by it to the different sounds of the language as it then was, are to be made universal, the occasional exceptions being altered into conformity with the general rule. It is the spelling which the copyist of that MS. would presumably have used if he had been intent on a uniform orthography. A text of the fourteenth or fifteenth century, printed according to this system, could be read without difficulty, and by a little practice even fluently, with a pronunciation not widely different from that of its own time. It seems to us desirable that some such texts should be prepared and printed for school use. If a historical study of the English language and literature is to be made common in our educational institutions, it is important to lessen, in some degree at least, the difficulties arising from the endless and needless variations of Old-English spelling. It would be possible, and perhaps expedient, in such books, to give in the margin the actual spelling of one or two good manuscripts, in the most important cases where it differed from that used in the text. At the same time we think that if Chaucer is really to be *popularized*, it can only be done by modernizing his orthography. The words which belong to the modern language must appear in the spelling with which all are familiar. But it is not less necessary that the text should be so given that it can be read rhythmically. An uncertain and halting rhythm, which fails to fulfil its own promises, and is continually leaving the reader in the lurch, is beyond measure disagreeable, and even painful, to a rhythmic ear; plain prose is infinitely better than such a rhythm. To cure this defect, the unaccented *e* must be supplied just as far as is requisite to give each verse a proper rhythmic succession of syllables and accents. We venture to add the opening lines of the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales as a specimen of the arrangement which we have



in mind. Where the accent of a word varies from that now usual, it is marked in the text by an acute over the vowel of the accented syllable. A double dot over an *e* which is now silent shows that it is to be pronounced, and to make a separate syllable, in reading. A small circle over an *e* which is now heard shows that it is to be suppressed, or at least that it does not count as a syllable in the verse. The double dot and the circle may also be used for like purposes over other vowels. Where an *e*, which is not even written now, has to be supplied in reading, it is represented by a reversed apostrophe, as ['].

“ When that Apríl with his shower's sweet  
 The drought of March hath piercéd to the root,  
 And bathéd every vein in such liquór,  
 Of which virtúe engendered is the flower ; —  
 When Zephirus eke with his sweet' breath  
 Inspiréd hath in every holt and heath  
 The tender crop's, and the young' sun  
 Hath in the Ram his half' course y-run,  
 And small' fowl's makè melody,  
 That sleep' all the night with opèn eye,  
 So pricketh them natúre in their \* coráges : —  
 Then long' folk to go on pilgrimages,  
 And palmers for to seek' strangè strands  
 To <sup>b</sup> fernè \* halwès, <sup>d</sup> kouth<sup>c</sup> in sundry lands ;  
 And specially, from every shirè's end  
 Of Eng'lánd, to Canterbury they wend,  
 The holy blissful martyr for to seek,  
 That them hath holpen when that they were sick.”

\* hearts.

<sup>b</sup> distant.<sup>c</sup> saints.<sup>d</sup> known.

In such a text we should have a genuine Chaucer, the *ipsa verba*, if not the *ipsissima*, of the poet himself. But it would be free from the worst of those stumbling-blocks which now vex and baffle the ordinary reader. The general aspect of the words would be familiar to his eye ; the sense would be almost or quite as easy to apprehend as that of Shakespeare ; and the lines would yield without pains and puzzling a rhythm fairly satisfactory to the ear. In thus giving to Chaucer a modernized orthography, we should only be treating him as we do Shakespeare ; no editor thinks of reproducing the spelling of the old folios. If Shakespeare were accessible only in that antiquated orthography, it is certain that the number of his readers and the extent of his influence would be seriously diminished.

Since the foregoing paragraphs were written we have received “ Part II.” of the work under review. This, however, does not finish the book. “ On account of the unexpected length ” of the author's

"investigations, the Societies for which they are published have found it most convenient to divide them into *four* parts, instead of *two*, as previously contemplated." This second part contains a little more than two hundred pages, of which about two thirds are occupied with the pronunciation of English prior to the fourteenth century, as well as that of the Anglo-Saxon, Old Icelandic, and Gothic; while the remainder treats of the correspondence of orthography with pronunciation from Anglo-Saxon times to the present day. A hasty glance has shown us that it is rich in curious and instructive matter; but we cannot yet undertake to criticise, or even to describe, its contents. We will speak of only one point which has chanced to attract our attention while turning over its pages. In representing, as he does by palaeotype, the original pronunciation of various specimen-texts of early English, it seems to us that Mr. Ellis has hardly been as careful and exact as could have been desired in reference to vowel quantities. That he has been satisfied with treating this matter somewhat easily, may be inferred from the fact that he occasionally varies from himself in the course of one or two pages. Thus *ase*, "as," in selections from Dan Michel, is given (*aase*) on page 412, but (*ase*) on page 413. In an extract from Richard de Hampole, on page 414, the adverb *here* is given both as (*heer*) and (*her*). In a paternoster, on page 442, we find in forms of the verb *do* both (*don*) and (*misdoon*), where, too, one is surprised to see a long quantity in the prefix *mis*; compare also (*doon*) on the next page. In an *ave* and *credo*, on page 443, *laurd*, "lord," is represented by (*laavird*), but *lauerd*, a variation of the same word, by (*laverd*). On the same page, the adjective *ded*, "dead," appears both as (*ded*) and as (*deed*); and the imperative of the verb *forgive* appears as (*forgiiv*), but the indicative as (*forgiveth*). In this last case, if any distinction was to be made, we might have expected (*forgiv*) and (*forgiiveth*); authority for this could be produced from the *Ormulum*. In the proclamation of Henry III. (1258), the ending *-liche*, = modern *-ly*, appears as (*-liitshe*) on page 501, but as (*-litshe*) on page 503.

The English language has sometimes been spoken of as having wholly lost the distinctions of vowel quantity which belonged to the Anglo-Saxon; as if it stood related to the mother language in this respect as the French is related to the Latin, or the modern to the ancient Greek. It is true that in comparing Anglo-Saxon with English, we find extensive changes of vowel quantity. Long vowels where they follow the accented syllable have been shortened almost uniformly. Thus the Anglo-Saxon *-lice*, early English *-liche* (*-liitshe*), has become *ly* in adjectives and adverbs of modern English. But in accented syllables, if

we mistake not, a careful comparison will show that the vowel quantity of the Anglo-Saxon has been preserved in a majority of the words which have come to us from that source. And most of the changes, whether from long to short or from short to long, can be referred to a small number of euphonic principles or tendencies. The effect of a weak *r* (before a consonant or at the end of a word) to lengthen the vowel before it, as in *far*, *aware*, *horse*, etc., is one of the most important cases. The similar lengthening before *ld* and *nd*, as in *child*, *find*, etc., is as old as the thirteenth century, being the general rule in the Ormulum; and it is a fair question whether *child* and *wild* on page 483, and *hundes*, "hounds," on page 479, should not have been given with a long vowel. Still more numerous changes have been occasioned by the tendency to lengthen the short vowel of an accented penult when separated by only one consonant sound from the following unaccented vowel. The long sounds in *water*, *naked*, *evil*, *open*, etc., owe their origin to this tendency; and so do those in *name*, *make*, *law*, *eat*, *hope*, and a multitude of others, which originally ended in an unaccented syllable. Now this tendency also is found in the Ormulum, which carries it to a greater extent even than modern English: thus, *narrow*, *heavy*, *body*, *love*, *give*, *written*, *summer*, etc., are found in the Ormulum with a long vowel in the first of their two syllables. In such cases as these, the modern English agrees with the Anglo-Saxon in using a short vowel; a fact which shows that the long vowel could not have been universal in the thirteenth century, the time of the Ormulum. We think that Mr. Ellis, who writes a long vowel in some of these words, — such as *give*, *written*, *summer*, — in other works of that century, would have done better to give them short as in Anglo-Saxon and modern English. Still less can we approve of his writing in cases where it is at variance with the Anglo-Saxon, the Ormulum, and the modern English, together; as in (wen) for *wen* (page 412), A. S. *wén*, Orm. *wenenn*, "to *ween*"; (leev) for *leve* (page 414), A. S. *lifian*, Orm. *libbenn*, "to *live*"; (gret) for *grete*, (page 479), A. S. *greát*, Orm. *græt*, "great." It is not unlikely, however, that some of these cases are mere errors of the press.

We hope that Mr. Ellis, in the parts yet to appear, may regard this matter of vowel quantity as worthy of a closer attention than he seems thus far to have given it; and may thus add to the completeness and exactness of his admirable work.